

Education and Languages

Introductions

In this course, we will rely on the original words of various writers. They will be excerpted and redacted, but without losing the sense of the authority of the originators. The course will claim no authority. It is designed to facilitate dialogue.

Education is found to be concerned with two fundamental processes:

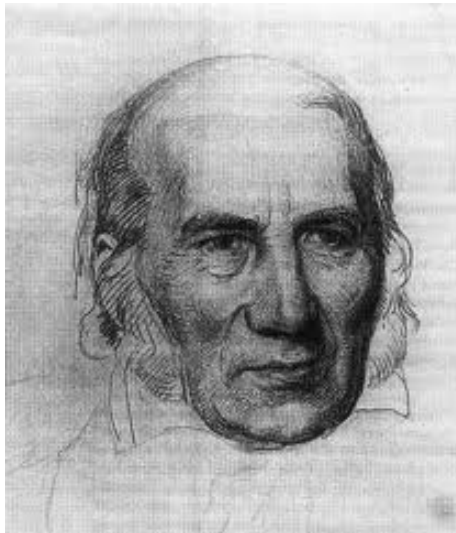
One is the development of the individual through the several crises of growing-up, until adulthood is fully achieved. This is a matter that goes deeper than, and has older origins than, schooling. It can take place with or without formal schooling. It is of primary concern that the young are brought to well-adjusted adulthood. This concern informs our selection throughout, for example in excerpts from Jean Lave, and it is directly addressed in Andy Blunden's writing about Vygotsky.

The second fundamental process is the development and creation of humanity by itself. This matter is touched upon in our excerpts from Paulo Freire, Frederick Engels, and Baruch Spinoza. Education, to be human, has to recognize that each generation remains at the frontier of change and development of humanity itself. Not only are the young led out to freedom, as far as possible, but they must also face the historical limitations of humanity in the present time, and be capable of acting upon those limitations so as to take humanity forward.

Arising from the same human history is the fact that schooling has become an instrument of class perpetuation. Compulsory universal schooling is a product of the bourgeois age, and it developed within capitalism. Schooling is dominated by the requirement of the bourgeoisie for bearers of commodity labour power, with added value in the shape of literacy and basic numeracy, all done at state expense.

This means that the transformation of schooling to answer fundamental human educational needs is a revolutionary task of liberation. A full revolution away from capitalism will not be possible, or sustainable, without a revolutionary transformation of schooling. This is what Lenin is saying, and so is the more naïve but rather successful Danish educator, N F S Grundtvig.

In the third part, we review SADTU's 2030 Vision, and touch on languages. The last part, given for further reading, is from Frantz Fanon's "The Wretched of the Earth".



[N F S Grundtvig, 1783–1872](#)

School for Life

“A folk high school becomes what it is because of the individuals of which it is made. Learning happens across social positions and differences – the teacher learns from the student and vice versa in a living exchange and mutual teaching. For Grundtvig dialogue across differences was essential – the ideal was that people must learn to bear with the differences of each other before enlightenment can be realized.”

[\(Wikipedia entry on Folk High School\)](#)

N F S Grundtvig was the pioneer of the idea of the “Folk High School”, the first of which was established by some of his followers, in Denmark, in 1844. The Danish Folk High Schools continue to flourish up to today and are now more numerous than ever.

In step with other Western European continental countries, Denmark passed through two major transitions: abolition of serfs, co-incident with the French revolution in the late 18th Century; and institution of bourgeois democracy, co-incident with the widespread revolutions of 1848.

Denmark moved, in the 19th Century, from being an extremely divided population of which the larger part was rural, uneducated, poor and insecure, to being a modern and much more homogenous society of near-universal literacy. Denmark became a nation, in the sense of the word “nation” that we in South Africa use when we speak of nation-building, which is to say both democratic, and educated.

For the purposes of this CU course on Education, the most remarkable characteristic of the Folk High School is that there is no prior educational requirement for entry to

the school, and no “qualifications” are issued by the school. This is also how the Communist University works: no entry barrier, and no certificate on exit.

The Danish Folk High Schools did not, and still do not, replace formal schooling, and they did not compete with it or diminish formal schooling in any way. Quite to the contrary, the informal Folk High Schools complement the formal academic establishment in an entirely benevolent and beneficial manner. This complementarity was part of Grundtvig’s intention when he wrote of the “School for Life”.

What the Folk High Schools did, in total, was to provide a way in which the level of education among the entire population could be raised in the present time. The formal schooling system alone could not do this.

Formal schooling is by nature compartmentalised. Each topic stands apart from all of the others. Formal schooling as such is predominately confined mainly to the early years of life. The vast provision of resources to formal schooling must of necessity be concentrated in this way.

This being the case, and in the absence of any other process, it becomes a matter of wishful thinking, or else of resignation to a process lasting many generations, to speak of a general raising of the educational level, if no other thing is done.

In South Africa, the formal schooling system is fully developed and all children are enrolled for entry to school. The system does produce engineers, doctors and other professionals, sufficient for the country’s needs. But the drop-out rate is enormous, and even of those who complete schooling, a large proportion remain functionally illiterate and innumerate.

In short, the formal schoolings system is failing to raise the general level of education in the country. This has been the case for generations past, and although there is change for the better in the system, yet those who have been and are still being abandoned are many.

Common expressions of desire for “life-long learning” in South Africa are not matched by corresponding practical provisions, most of the time. Employers are often reluctant to provide

The strong faith in formal schooling that exists in bureaucratic and in political circles in South Africa, has up to now driven down all attempts to establish informal and general educational initiatives, whether on the lines of the Danish Folk High Schools, or any other.

Grundtvig, Message, Achievement and Comparisons

N F S Grundtvig built a nation, peacefully, through education. This is a large, but reasonable claim. Grundtvig was the “vanguard” of the folk-high-school movement and of the corresponding mass democratic movement that made Denmark a nation.

Grundtvig’s message, in the excerpts that we are using, is made up of a few simple juxtapositions. The Dead and the Living. The Latin and the Danish. Development and Enlightenment *versus* their opposites. This is a dialectical method and therefore, a developmental method, where “development” is taken in the Hegelian sense.

In South Africa, we speak of People’s Education for People’s Power. We speak of Education for Liberation. This is in the context of our liberation struggle against apartheid and “colonialism of a special type”. Denmark also had a political context of national liberation. Denmark is adjacent to the much more powerful state of Germany, which made war on Denmark in 1864, and seized the Danish Province of Schleswig-Holstein. This event caused a sense of great urgency in the mass education movement in Denmark. Revival of old national symbols would not be enough to sustain national cohesion. Education had become a matter of survival.

What these Danes successfully negotiated in the 19th Century is in many ways analogous to what is happening now in South Africa, and in other countries, and the theories of Grundtvig are comparable to those of other liberation educationalists.

Freire and Tagore Compared to Grundtvig

A world-wide sense of crisis in education has stimulated continuing interest in the general provision of educational service to the existing populations as a whole. Our South African “Communist University” is such an attempt.

Some compare Grundtvig’s approach in popular education to that of Paulo Freire, author of “The Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, and to that of [Rabindranath Tagore](#), the famous exponent and moderniser of Bengali culture, who was also a contemporary, friend and collaborator of M K Gandhi’s.

The Brazilian, Paulo Freire, who was strongly associated with the mid-to-late 20th-century “Liberation Theology” movement centred on South America, with both Protestant and Catholic strands, confronted a similar problematic to the one that faced Grundtvig. This was a peasant or “campesino” population, left behind, in a situation where an older order was crumbling.

The Communist University has relied upon the teachings of Paulo Freire from its beginning. Freire's dialogical principle of education corresponds almost exactly to the Grundtvigian practice. What is different is Freire's reference to the political oppression of the learners. Freire says that education cannot properly happen without constant, consistent recognition of the oppressive circumstances surrounding the educational initiative and process.

Rabindranath Tagore, as a relatively wealthy man, started and funded a school from his own pocket – [Patha Bhavana](#) at [Santiniketan](#). Whether its principles were similar to those of Grundtvig and Freire is hard to tell. Patha Bhavana seems to have owed a lot to Tagore's rather idiosyncratic and spontaneous inspirations, varying from time to time.

What Tagore seems to have done in general in his life is to bring his own exquisite and highly-developed Brahmin culture to the masses of Bengal. Particularly in terms of the songs that he wrote, which became enormously and lastingly popular, Tagore is credited with creating a modern (Bengali) nation through education and culture.

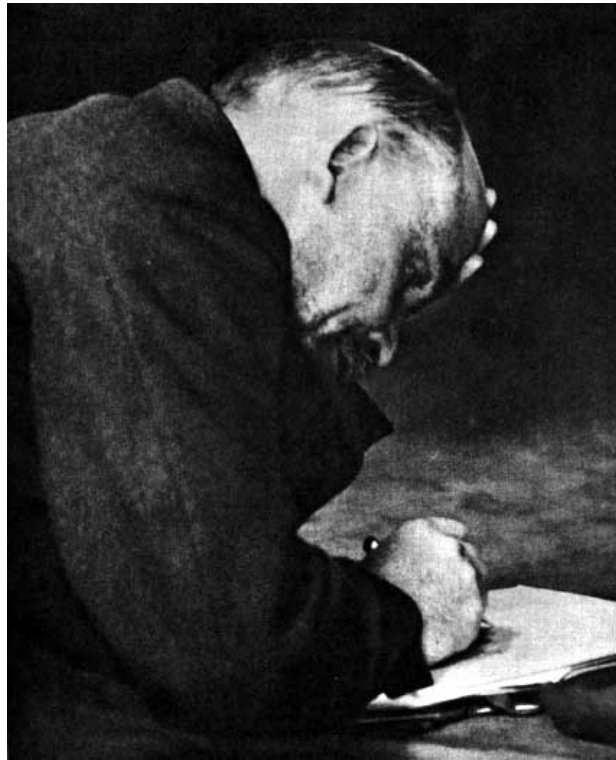
This is really what Tagore has in common with Grundtvig and with Freire, and what is most useful for our CU course on education. Because we are seeking by any and every means possible, to expand the common and general culture of the South African population.

In South Africa we find a relentless and apparently insurmountable urge to destroy the informal and to replace it with the formal. This is not only in education, but it is especially strong in the field of education. It is something shared between the old and the new regimes of South Africa, pre-and post-1994.

For communists, who seek a society without class, and therefore without a state, the rush towards the formal and away from self-management is dismaying. But in practice the informal, the general, is the stuff of daily life and it cannot in that sense be suppressed. Nor is formal schooling going to be suppressed. What N F S Grundtvig showed was that the formal and the informal could co-exist, and that it was necessary for them to do so. This was the foundation of the Danish nation.

The Communist University has never been sponsored, but it has always been supported by learners. It is informal in the way of the Danish folk-high-schools.

The struggle continues.



All education is political

All education is political. Education prepares the individual child and each entire new generation to take its place within the polity. Education confirms the existing polity, reproducing it.

In 1983 somebody wrote:

“At the base of the modern social order stands not the executioner but the professor. Not the guillotine, but the (aptly named) doctorate d’état is the main tool and symbol of state power. The monopoly of legitimate education is now more important, more central than the monopoly of legitimate violence”

[Gellner, *Nations and nationalism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 1983, p. 34].

“Political Education” becomes a category separate from schooling in general, only because schooling belongs to the ruling system, under a certain ruling class. Even though it is a society in revolution, and its government is formed by a revolutionary liberation movement, it is not possible to teach what we call political education, in schools, in South Africa.

Nothing illustrates the nature of class power more clearly than this. The political education given in schools confirms the status quo. It is conservative and it is bourgeois. It does not even admit to being political.

“Taxpayer’s money” will only be used to pay for political education that preserves the position of the bourgeoisie. In the twentieth year after the first universal-franchise election in South Africa, this fact stares at us, but few of us stare back. The common critique of education is rather that it is not bourgeois enough!

Even those “radicals” who, for example, would expropriate land from white farmers on a large scale and without compensation, give little thought to the nature of education. The people who would settle on that land, if any, would be educated as bourgeois, would only be capable of reproducing a bourgeois economy on that land, and would demand the installation of bourgeois schools on that land. This would not be radical change, but it would be confirmation of the *status quo*.

Is there any conception of what a revolutionary school might be? Here is Lenin on Education:

“...we have to abandon the old standpoint that education should be non-political; we cannot conduct educational work in isolation from politics.”

“That idea has always predominated in bourgeois society. The very term “apolitical” or “non-political” education is a piece of bourgeois hypocrisy...”

“In all bourgeois states the connection between the political apparatus and education is very strong, although bourgeois society cannot frankly acknowledge it.”

“We are living in an historic period of struggle against the world bourgeoisie, which is far stronger than we are. At this stage of the struggle, we have to safeguard the development of the revolution and combat the bourgeoisie in the military sense and still more by means of our ideology through education, so that the habits, usages and convictions acquired by the working class in the course of many decades of struggle for political liberty - the sum total of these habits, usages and ideas - should serve as an instrument for the education of all working people. It is for the proletariat to decide how the latter are to be educated. We must inculcate in the working people the realisation that it is impossible and inexcusable to stand aside in the proletariat’s struggle...”

“We must re-educate the masses; they can be re-educated only by agitation and propaganda. The masses must be brought, in the first place, into the work of building the entire economic life. That must be the principal and basic object in the work of each agitator and propagandist, and when he realises this, the success of his work will be assured.”



[Paulo Freire, 1921 - 1997](#)

People's education for people's power

Our method is to take a text, and discuss it. This method is modelled on the theory and practice of the late Paulo Freire. It is appropriate, then, to begin our course on Education itself, with Freire.

In the first place, Freire can assist us greatly in defining what we are pursuing in this course on Education. We are looking for a pedagogical theory: a theory of teaching and learning. What is it for? What is education for? What is educational theory for? Paulo Freire is an example of one who explored such questions, and he did so within a liberation-struggle context, akin to our own.

In the first sentence of Paulo Freire's "[Pedagogy of The Oppressed](#)" Freire "problematizes" what he calls "humanisation". That sentence says:

"While the problem of humanization has always, from an axiological point of view, been humankind's central problem, it now takes on the character of an inescapable concern."

Axiology is the philosophical study of value. Freire declares his principle value. It is humanisation. It corresponds directly to the South African concept of "ubuntu".

"But while both humanization and dehumanization are real alternatives, only the first is the people's vocation," says Freire, asserting this political and moral principle as a

starting point. In doing so, Freire stands side-by-side with Karl Marx, who, in his masterpiece “Capital”, and all his life, wanted to restore humanity to itself. This is what education is for.

Let us look at some more of Marx’s, and Freire’s words.

In his 1844 [Introduction to a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right](#), at the gestation, if not quite at the birth of “Marxism”, Marx wrote: *“Criticism has plucked the imaginary flowers on the chain not in order that man shall continue to bear that chain without fantasy or consolation, but so that he shall throw off the chain and pluck the living flower.”*

Above all, Marx wanted humans to be human. Criticism was not to crush, but to set humans free. Similarly, Freire’s educational method is called “critical pedagogy”. It rests on the fundamental question of philosophy: the relation of mind to matter (Subject to Object). It asks to be judged according to that principle. So on page 3 of Chapter One of the “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, Freire writes:

“... one cannot conceive of objectivity without subjectivity. Neither can exist without the other, nor can they be dichotomized. The separation of objectivity from subjectivity, the denial of the latter when analyzing reality or acting upon it, is objectivism. On the other hand, the denial of objectivity in analysis or action, resulting in a subjectivism which leads to solipsistic positions, denies action itself by denying objective reality. Neither objectivism nor subjectivism, nor yet psychologism is propounded here, but rather subjectivity and objectivity in constant dialectical relationship.

Explicitly embracing his connection with Marx, Freire continues:

“To deny the importance of subjectivity in the process of transforming the world and history is naive and simplistic. It is to admit the impossible: a world without people. This objectivistic position is as ingenuous as that of subjectivism, which postulates people without a world. World and human beings do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction. Man does not espouse such a dichotomy; nor does any other critical, realistic thinker. What Marx criticized and scientifically destroyed was not subjectivity, but subjectivism and psychologism.”

Education as the refreshment and renewal of humanity is declared by these words from the last paragraph of his Chapter 1:

“Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality and thereby coming to

know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators.

The Communists, in their own minds and in their intentions, seek to educate, organise and mobilise, not so as to command the working class and the general masses, but to help to set them free. The problem of how to do so is exactly the problem that Freire addresses in “The Pedagogy of the Oppressed.” It requires the formulation quoted above: “World and human beings do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction.”

Freire writes about leadership and people both being human Subjects, “co-intent on reality”. This is what gives meaning both to education, and to politics. Leadership (teacher) and masses (learners) are “co-intent on reality”, coping together with the open reality of human life within an objective material universe.

We are talking here of revolutionary pedagogy. We are talking here of teaching with a purpose and a reason that anyone can understand, i.e. we are teaching with “intentionality”. The students can understand it.

We are talking of liberation. In South Africa this concept is called “people’s education for people’s power”.

Down with the Banking Theory!

It was Paulo Freire who gave us the word “conscientise”.

It was Paulo Freire, more than any other, who showed how the bourgeois education system, with its “**banking**” theory of pedagogy, is not well designed to educate learners in the true sense of the word “educate”, but is principally and intentionally designed to reproduce the class relations that suit the ruling bourgeois class.

Education, which should by nature liberate the student, is made by the bourgeoisie into a means of repression, said Freire.

How can we make sure that education becomes part of the building of people’s power? To ask such a question is to “problematise” education. To ask such a question is to begin a “dialogue” about education.

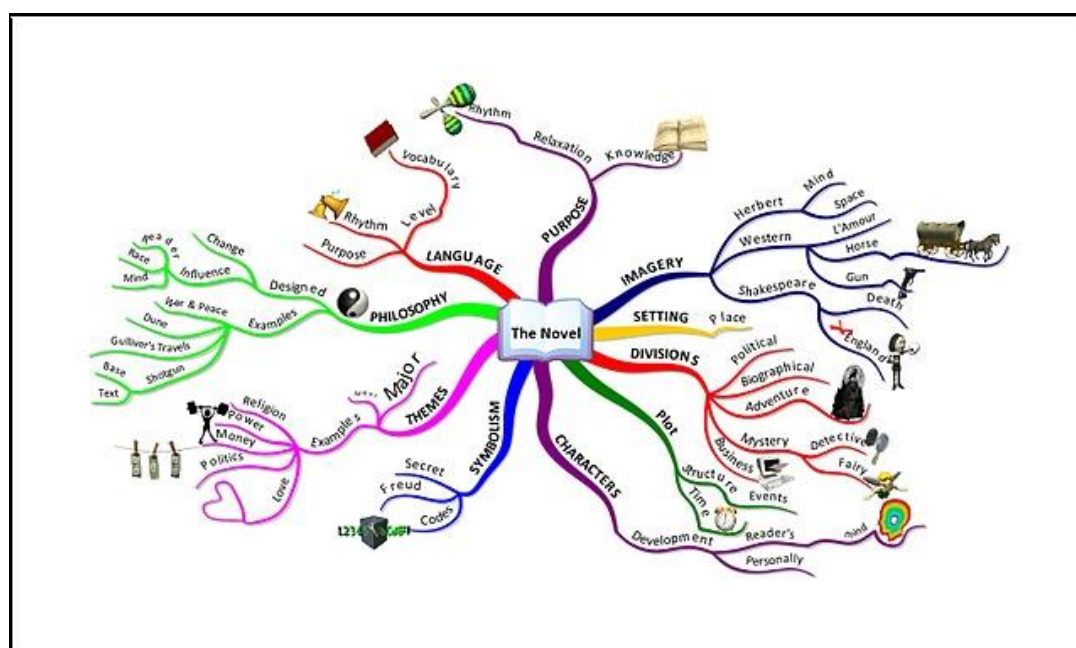
Freire thought that the education of the oppressed, if it was patronising, would be counter-productive. It would reproduce and reinforce the features of the oppressive

bourgeois state. The method for avoiding the reproduction of oppression through education would have to be different and new, he thought.

So in the dialogical method that Paulo Freire devised and called the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, or otherwise Critical Pedagogy, there is no elementary, junior, senior, matriculation, undergraduate, post-graduate, doctorate or professor level. Teachers are learners and learners are teachers; all are free-willing subjects, capable of leadership at any moment.

As much as there may be a room and a gathering of individuals, each known by name, and a “codification” which is the text or other object prepared for the occasion, yet the dialogue admits no imaginary limits. The Freirean gathering is not sheltered. It is one of the essentials of Freirean Pedagogy that we refuse the fiction of the sheltered classroom, and instead recognise that the oppressor is around us and even within us, while we strive to liberate ourselves through our mutual, pedagogical dialogue.

In Freirean practice, there is no such thing as a basic level, or an advanced level. All that we can do is to practice a common process of “problematism”, beginning with education itself. For the late Freire all education was a political act and a social act, an act of liberation and an act of self-liberation. In Freire’s writings, philosophy, politics and education are considered together without any sharp borders between them.



Buzan Mind-map

Use Your Head

The fourth item in the first part of the ten-week Communist University “Education” course is our overview or of Tony Buzan’s book, “Use Your Head”. The author Buzan does not propose, or proceed from, any overt political premises. What makes his work stand out from the others is its great practical effectiveness. Yet it becomes clear that it is dialectical. And it is intentional. Therefore it is Freirean, whether consciously or unconsciously.

From a practical point of view, Buzan’s appeal is that he offers assistance with faster, more purposeful reading; with memorising; and with note-taking, particularly using his invention, the “mind-map” technique, of which an example is given above. These techniques are just what students need to help them get through their studies, and just what conventional education often failed to give them. Students used to be obliged to try to learn before having learned *how* to learn. Buzan fills this gap.

But what underlies Buzan’s approach? It is not that he was lucky to stumble upon three techniques, like a prospector discovering diamonds. No. What distinguishes the mind-map, in particular, from other forms of note-taking characterised by lists and bullet-points, is that it begins and ends as a “unity and struggle of opposites”. It is a representation, in one glance, of the way in which any phenomenon is the product, or resultant, of many abstract dynamic forces, or vectors, pulling in different directions. The mind-map is therefore a very good illustration of exactly what is meant by “dialectics”.

The other main characteristic of Buzan’s approach is its “intentionality”, to borrow a term from Paulo Freire’s vocabulary. Towards the end of Chapter 1 of Freire’s “The Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, Freire quotes Alvaro Vieira Pinto saying that intentionality is “*the fundamental property of consciousness*”, remarking that this concept is “*of great importance for the understanding of a problem-posing pedagogy*”. Buzan’s approach is full of intentionality. There is no question, for Buzan, of wandering about, learning for learning’s sake, in a random, eclectic way. Buzan says that you must be looking for a result.

Karl Marx, in the 11th Thesis on Feuerbach, said that while the philosophers have interpreted it, the point is to change the world. Thus intentionality, as well as dialectics and dialogue, are common and basic themes in Freire, Buzan and Marx.



Frederick Engels

Man made by labour

As well as being short, the essay of Engels' called "The Part played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man" is very easy to read and to understand. Yet it explains a lot that is hardly covered by the conventional education of a "Western" bourgeois or bourgeois-dominated person.

Man, or Woman the Creator?

Evelyn Reed added to Engels' understanding, by pointing out (in "Womens' Evolution") that it was women who invented and perfected the technologies upon which we continue to rely today. The increase of wealth occasioned by the technological advances made by women, brought pre-historic humans to the brink of history.

The pre-history of society, according to Engels, is "social organisation existing previous to recorded history", while recorded history is also and inevitably "the history of class struggles". These quotations are from the Communist Manifesto, Bourgeois and Proletarians, first line, and Engels' footnote to it. Engels wrote more extensively about history and pre-history in "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State".

At the dawn of history, several things happened at the same time. Property, the state, class struggle, the oppression of women, and writing, all came about at one. The new system of class division required all of these things, and we will, in the next part, see that it required schooling (i.e. an institutionalised and professional education system), as well.

“The Part played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man” proceeds to mention capitalism, before it breaks off.

Engels returned to the question of pre-historic human development, and the historical development of class struggle, seven years later after the death of his friend Karl Marx. In Marx’s papers, Engels found work, based partly on studies by the US writer Henry Morgan, and composed these into the full book called “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State”.

Not only Marx and Engels, but also one of the great founders of philosophy, Baruch de Spinoza, wrote about the self-development of human beings through learning. In the following widely-quoted passage, Spinoza wrote:

As far as the 'method for finding out the truth' is concerned, 'the matter stands on the same footing as the making of material tools.... For, in order to work iron, a hammer is needed, and the hammer cannot be forthcoming unless it has been made; but, in order to make it, there was need of another hammer and other tools, and so on to infinity. We might thus vainly endeavour to prove that men have no power of working iron.

'But as men at first made use of the instruments supplied by nature to accomplish very easy pieces of workmanship, laboriously and imperfectly, and then, when these were finished, wrought other things more difficult with less labour and greater perfection. . . . So, in like manner, the intellect, by its native strength, makes for itself intellectual instruments, whereby it acquires strength for performing other intellectual operations, and from these operations gets again fresh instruments, or the power of pushing its investigations further, and thus gradually proceeds till it reaches the summit of wisdom.'

**B. de Spinoza (1632-1677),
Improvement of the Understanding, Ethics and Correspondence**



[Jean Lave, from video lecture, Berkeley, California, March 2012](#)

Everyday Life and Learning

The big prize that is ahead of us in our studies, and which we are pursuing in this course on education, is a method that would serve to lift the entire population, as it is, to a higher and common level of revolutionary culture.

Jean Lave and her correspondents (the Activity Theorists) have arrived at the same point as ourselves by various routes. They present us with another glimpse at the prize that we seek. Simply, Jean Lave claims to have studied empirically, and then understood, some of the process by which education takes place, as it has always done, in everyday life, throughout human history and pre-history.

There are educative mechanisms in everyday life that serve to educate the people. Life is in fact a process of learning. Schooling may or may not be educative, but schooling in our circumstances leaves most of the people branded, in varying degrees, as failures and rejects, and schooling has no good answer for the unemployed and the excluded that it leaves behind.

The given text is redacted from a lecture given by Dr Lave, summing up the congress of ISCAR ([International Society for Cultural and Activity Research](#)).

What can we take from this? Jean Lave's theories and those of her colleagues have all-round revolutionary potential. A starting point could be to exploit the way that they provide a place from which to criticise schooling. These theories strip away

schooling's claims of unique, exclusive power in education. These theories can help restore dignity to processes that have been dismissed by the rise of schooling, or more specifically, by the rise of schooling of the capitalist kind, under capitalism.

As can be seen from the attached text file, Jean Lave is not shy to make the connection between her own critique and that of Karl Marx, citing the Third Thesis on Feuerbach in particular. Lave also calls on the assistance of Gramsci and of the Gramscian scholars of today. The following is Jean Lave's non-sexist-language version of Marx's Third Thesis on Feuerbach:

"The materialist doctrine that people are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed people are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is people who change circumstances and that it is essential to educate the educator her/himself. Hence, this doctrine necessarily arrives at dividing society into two parts, one of which is superior to society. The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionizing practice." (Marx, 1845)

Blunden on Vygotsky

“The whole process of becoming human is driven, from beginning to end, by the striving of the child to overcome the limitations to its self-determination and emancipate itself from imprisonment by its own drives. This drive for emancipation then proves to be the only genuinely human drive, the drive which knows no end and transcends all barriers.” (p.12)

Vygotsky understands the movement from quantity to quality, and he understands the pursuit of freedom as being the source and the basis of human morality. In both of these matters, we are talking about the development of the human free-willing Subject, individual and collective.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, in the Communist Manifesto, wrote that in the classless society, the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

Andy Blunden’s lecture “Vygotsky’s Theory of Child Development”

(See also Andy Blunden’s definition of “neoformation” on page 7 of the text. “Neoformation” is a new – to the child, at the time - form of social interaction)

Let us quote:

“So it is clear under these circumstances that it is the position of this central neoformation in the Zone of Proximal Development which is crucial if the teacher is interested in assisting the child in making a development, rather than in simply learning to do more things.

“On the other hand, during the long stable periods of development, that is precisely what the child needs. The central line of development is the maturing and consolidation of the central neoformation which characterises the whole stage of development. And during the early phase of that stage, while a child is still stabilising the neoformation of that stage, operating at the higher level is beyond the child’s imagination and reach. This only becomes possible when the central neoformation has matured.

“So during the stable periods of development, the social situation of development obliges the child to strive to master the psychological functions lying within limits imposed by her social situation of development and as a result of this striving, the central neoformation develops and leads the whole process of development.

“Vygotsky assumes that carers and teachers will be aware of those psychological functions which lie within the Zone of Proximal Development, and which Neoformations are central and which peripheral. Appropriate instruction which promotes the striving of the child and the differentiation and growth of the central neoformation will assist development, whereas efforts to interest the child in other activity, which involves peripheral lines of development or are beyond the child’s age level of ability, will not be expected to bring any benefit in development.

“During the latter stages of that stable phase of development, the child begins to be able to perceive new possibilities, and by assisting the child, the teacher or carer may be able to see that qualitatively new functions are coming to be within the child’s reach, and instruction should be directed at encouraging these new forms of activity.

“It is here that Vygotsky’s concept of the “Zone of Proximal Development” is relevant. Instruction may lead development, if and only if instruction assists the child in promoting the differentiation of the *leading* neoformation. Vygotsky proposed that what the child can do *today with assistance* (for example by asking leading questions, offering suggestions) or *in play* (which allows the child to strive to do what they actually cannot yet do), they will be able to do *tomorrow without assistance*. The desired “flow over” to different functions resulting from success in performing the given task will occur **only if the intervention has promoted the central or leading neoformation**. Otherwise, teaching by assisting the child with a task may help them learn that task, but there will be no flow over to development.”

In spite of the jargon, it is clear that Vygotsky has a theory of development. Piaget, on the other hand, assumes spontaneous development as a given.



Frantz Fanon, 1925 - 1961

We must not voodoo the people

In the well-known chapter from “The Wretched of the Earth” called “Pitfalls of National Consciousness”, Frantz Fanon says things like:

“In its beginnings, the national bourgeoisie of the colonial countries identifies itself with the decadence of the bourgeoisie of the West. We need not think that it is jumping ahead; it is in fact beginning at the end. It is already senile before it has come to know the petulance, the fearlessness or the will to succeed of youth.”

After such denunciations, it is quite easy to overlook the more positive, last third of this essay, in which Fanon the freedom fighter and psychologist seeks to prescribe what the newly-independent ex-colonial country, which he refers to as the under-developed country, should do; and this mostly has to do with education.

For example:

*“**Everything can be explained to the people**, on the single condition that you really want them to understand.”*

“Now, political education means opening their minds, awakening them, and allowing the birth of their intelligence; as Césaire said, it is 'to invent souls'. To educate the masses politically does not mean, cannot mean making a political speech. What it means is to try, relentlessly and passionately, to teach the

*masses that everything depends on them; that if we stagnate it is their responsibility, and that if we go forward it is due to them too, that there is no such thing as a demiurge, that there is no famous man who will take the responsibility for everything, but that the demiurge is the people themselves and **the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people.***

*“The collective struggle presupposes collective responsibility at the base and collegiate responsibility at the top. Yes; everybody will have to be compromised in the fight for the common good. No one has clean hands; **there are no innocents and no onlookers.** We all have dirty hands; we are all soiling them in the swamps of our country and in the terrifying emptiness of our brains. Every onlooker is either a coward or a traitor.”*

*“The duty of those at the head of the movement is to have the masses behind them. Allegiance presupposes awareness and understanding of the mission which has to be fulfilled; in short, an intellectual position, however embryonic. **We must not voodoo the people,** nor dissolve them in emotion and confusion.”*

*“To educate the masses politically is to make the totality of **the nation a reality to each citizen.** It is to make the history of the nation part of the personal experience of each of its citizens.”*

Here are some words from the Conclusion to Fanon’s “The Wretched of the Earth”:

“Let us try to create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth.

“All the elements of a solution to the great problems of humanity have, at different times, existed in European thought. But Europeans have not carried out in practice the mission which fell to them, which consisted of bringing their whole weight to bear violently upon these elements, of modifying their arrangement and their nature, of changing them and, finally, of bringing the problem of mankind to an infinitely higher plane.

“Today, we are present at the stasis of Europe.

“Two centuries ago, a former European colony decided to catch up with Europe. It succeeded so well that the United States of America became a monster, in which the taints, the sickness and the inhumanity of Europe have grown to appalling dimensions.

“Comrades, have we not other work to do than to create a third Europe?”